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SUBJECT: NINEWA: TURKOMAN TRIBAL LEADER ON TURKEY, RELATIONS WITH THE
KURDS, AND NEW GOVERNMENT FORMATION IN BAGHDAD

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REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Sheikh Seyh Beyatli, leader of the Turkoman Beyatli tribe, believes Turkey is meddling in Turkoman affairs in Iraq. He claims Turkey's main goal is to remove any sort of historical allegiances between the Kurds and Turkoman people to keep federalism from taking hold in Iraq. Beyatli claims Turkey fears a separate Kurdish-controlled unit in Iraq might entice Turkish Kurds to seek a similar end. While there are tensions between the Kurds and Turkoman over "Kurdization" policies in Kirkuk where the two groups are in the majority, Beyatli claims there are relatively no problems between the two minorities in Ninewa. Beyatli says the impasse over government formation in Iraq is the fault of both Prime Minister Ibrahim Al Ja'afari and those seeking to end his candidacy. The most important issue is to have a central government to ensure the country's stability and security, he says. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) PRT PolOff met with Sheikh Seyh Abdulhamit Ahmet Beyatli, leader of the Turkoman Dignitaries and Tribes of Iraq (TDTI) party in Mosul on April 13.

TURKISH INFLUENCE IN IRAQ SPLITTING TURKOMAN

¶3. (C) Begun on February 6, 2004, the Turkoman Dignitaries and Tribes of Iraq (TDTI) party claims to be a more independent and secular-minded than rival Iraqi Turkoman Front (TF). Originally aligned with TF, Beyatli moved away from that party believing it was "too controlled by Turkey," and formed his own independent organization, TDTI, which aligned with Ayad Allawi's secular coalition for the December 2005 national election. After the fall of the regime Beyatli worked with TF for "one year and two months," he claimed, until the relationship soured over what Beyatli said was the party's unusually close ties to Turkey. As a tribal representative, Beyatli said he always needed to act in the best interests of the Turkoman people. With TF, on the other hand, he did not believe that this was the case. Turkoman

Front was receiving funding and direction from Turkey, claimed Beyatli, and he did not want to be an "agent for Turkish influence." Turkey was against federalism, especially for the Kurds, he said, and so was TF. He claimed this issue caused a split within the Iraqi Turkoman community that had "historically aligned" itself with the Kurds, or at least sympathized with their plight. Turkey did not want to see the Kurds get their "rights" or the same might happen in Turkey, said Beyatli.

GOVERNMENT FORMATION FOR STABILITY IN IRAQ

¶4. (C) Beyatli said Iraqis were unhappy with the security situation in the country, especially after the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra in February. He claimed former Baathists and foreign insurgents were stirring the pot, so to speak, of ethnic tension throughout the country. Beyatli accused the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) and Iraqi National Dialogue Council (INDC), Iraq's two largest Sunni Arab political parties, of "covering up" for the activities of terrorists. "For decades these guys had the government in their hands," said Beyatli, "but now they were causing chaos." Four months without a government was too long to wait, all because Prime Minister Ibrahim Al Ja'afari would not step aside and opposition groups would not stop insisting Ja'afari do so, he said. The result was a complete breakdown of Iraqi faith in the democratic process. TDTI, on the other hand, although limited in funding and support, was pushing both sides to work for the interests of Iraqi society, he said. Beyatli said TDTI outreach included convincing the people that it did not matter who sat in the leadership position so long as there was a government that could provide security and stability.

KIRKUK AND "KURDIZATION"

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¶5. (C) Beyatli claimed Kirkuk was a "Turkoman city." Saddam Hussein's Arabization policy forced the Turkoman out, but since the fall of the regime the Kurds had been reversing the process, he said. As a result, the "topography had changed," claimed Beyatli, and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) was now giving money (up to 4,000 dollars) and employment assistance to entice Kurds to migrate to Kirkuk. The Kurds numbered 23 percent historically, according to Beyatli, but were now around 35 percent of the population. The third largest group was the Arabs, he said. Beyatli claimed that Turkoman and Arabs were now joining together to fight Kurdization in Kirkuk, but that they were having a tough time due to Kurdish control of the provincial and city governments, and security forces in the area.

TURKOMAN AND KURD RELATIONS IN NINEWA

¶6. (C) In Ninewa, however, Turkoman and Kurds did not number more than 20 percent of the population, said Beyatli. And since Sunni Arabs made up the majority it could be expected they would win most of the seats in any provincial election, he said. Between Mosul and Tal Afar, for example, there were 450,000 Turkoman, 350,000 of which lived in Tal Afar [NOTE: these are unusually high estimates. Although predominantly Turkoman Sunni and Shia, Tal Afar's total population numbers far fewer than 200,000]. Beyatli thanked Coalition Forces (CF) for counterinsurgency efforts in Tal Afar last year, but said once CF departed terrorists would take control of the city. He blamed outsiders and foreigners for causing problems in Tal Afar, believing Turkoman would "never attack one another." Beyatli discounted claims of friction between Turkoman and the Kurds in Ninewa saying the two groups were minorities and therefore had more in common; a very different scenario than Kirkuk. Although he believed the Kurds had tried to occupy Tal

Afar in 2004, Peshmerga forces were "pushed out" by Turkoman residents. There had been relatively no problems in Ninewa between the two groups since, he said.

BACKGROUND AND COMMENT

17. (C) Beyatli was a deputy commander in the Iraqi Army (IA) during the former regime. He served as an independent national assemblymember during the former regime. In 1996 Beyatli served in the national assembly as an independent from Ninewa. In 2000 he ran again and won. He was proud of the fact that he was one of five independents to win from Ninewa since at the time independents competed amongst each other for a small number of seats from Ninewa, while Baathists competed on a separate ballot. He claimed he was asked by the CPA to play a role during the formation of the country's first provincial council in Ninewa in May 2003. Beyatli aligned with former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's secular list for Ninewa province last year, but that his seat was quite low, number 15, and the list won only two seats from the provincial ballot. Although uncertain about the Turkoman's future in Iraq, Beyatli remains steadfast in his work to move his people away from what he claims is "Turkish meddling" in their affairs. We are uncertain how influential he is within the Iraqi Turkoman community, and how valid his claims are regarding are regarding Turkish influence in the country.

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